Approved 03/18/2005.

5.1

NEWPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE
FACILITIES PLANNING SUBCOMMITTEE
Meeting, 8 a.m.
Tuesday, March 8, 2005

MINUTES

Call to Order. Subcommittee Chair Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr. called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. at Room 104, Lower Level, George H. Triplett Elementary School, 435 Broadway, Newport, Rhode Island. Sub-Committee Members: Facilitator Thomas Flanagan; Newport School Committee members Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr., Chairperson; Thomas S. Phelan, Dr. O. William Hilton (arrived 9:00 a.m. – left 11:30 a.m.); Newport City Council members Jeanne-Marie Napolitano (absent); Colleen McGrath (arrived 9:50 a.m.); City of Newport Director of Planning, Zoning, Development & Inspection Paige Bronk (Carey Parent); Newport Housing Authority Representative Pauline Moye; Newport School Department members Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mary C. Canole, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent of Schools Dr. Robert B. Power, Ed.D.; Director of Property Services Paul C. Fagan; Business Manager Bruce N. Alexander; NEA TAN Representative David Koutsogiane (Underwood – 5th Grade); AFSCME Council 94 Local 841 Representative Marcin G. Rembisz (Secretary to Director of Teaching, Learning and Professional Development); Energy Manager Richard Niejadlik (NACTC Technical Assistant); former Property Services Director Ed Brady (RIC Plant Operations); former Assistant Superintendent Sydney Williams (left 11:30 a.m.); Parent representatives Becky Bolan (Coggeshall PTO President) (arrived 9:25 a.m.); Lousia Boatwright (Coggeshall Parent); Raymond Gomes (Cranston-Calvert Parent) (left 1:00 p.m.); Patrick Kelley (Thompson Parent); and Community members Fern Lima, James Perrier and Mark Colborn (absent). Also present was Newport School Committee Chair Charles P. Shoemaker, M.D., Newport School Committee Member Jo Eva Gaines (arrived 10:00, left 11:30 a.m., returned 1:00 p.m.) and Carey School Principal Kimberly A. Homer (left 10:30 a.m.) and Coggeshall School Principal Robert Frizelle (left 10:30 a.m.).

ROLL CALL.

1.0 Welcome and Introduction

Dr. Canole introduced Subcommittee Facilitator Thomas Flanagan who would guide our discussion throughout the day.

2.0 Subcommittee Charge

Subcommittee Chair Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr. read the Subcommittee Charge:
To develop a realistic, long-term plan for Newport Public Schools that supports a twenty-first century instructional program and includes responses to the kitchen relocation; new fire code mandates; an elementary housing plan; Rogers High School science labs/library/locker rooms; Thompson Middle School maintenance; and building security concerns.

Mr. DeAscentis, Jr. also provided the first order of business for the subcommittee: ***to review all the elementary realignment data, make a recommendation to the Committee regarding next year's elementary school configuration, and provide the recommendation prior to the School Committee's March 15th, 2005, vote on whether or not to close a school.*** Mr. DeAscentis, Jr. advised the subcommittee members that the decision to close a school is not up to the subcommittee, but the Newport School Committee. The subcommittee will make a recommendation to the committee, the committee is free to accept or choose not to accept the recommendations. Dr. Mary C. Canole stated that all School Committee subcommittees serve in an advisory role. Mr. DeAscentis, Jr. indicated that the recommendations of sub-committees are given serious consideration by the School Committee.

3.0 Setting Ground Rules

Patrick Kelley asked if criteria had been determined for the closing of a school or if a matrix has been prepared. Paige Bronk recommended that we set out any and all known criteria to arrive at determinations of which, if any schools should be closed.

Jo Eva Gaines indicated that the intent of her motion calling for a decision was to make an announcement of next year's elementary alignment so that people could plan accordingly.

Tom Flanagan spoke about the need for a long term plan (5 -10 years). He indicated that many converging events have arisen and in order to avoid knee jerk reactions to the current budget deficit, the state mandated ceiling cap (5.5%) on the tax rate increase; reductions in state aid; reductions in federal aid; Newport City Council unknowns, the subcommittee must be careful not to be driven by the short term situations. Look at the What If's and desires.

Mr. Flanagan recommended that the subcommittee start where we need to go considering the constraints of our present facilities, then look at short term solutions.

4.0 Essential Question: How can we best deliver a quality elementary education program for our students?

Dr. Mary C. Canole, Ed.D. presented an overview of elementary education to provide a common base for the beginnings of work.

Dr. Canole shared the newly drafted 2005-2008 Strategic Plan for Newport Public Schools. The District Strategic Plan sets out the Mission Statement, Guiding Beliefs and Vision for the Newport Public Schools.

Mission Statement: The Mission of Newport Public Schools in partnership with students, families, and the community is to provide a challenging education with appropriate supports and academic rigor so that each student will possess the knowledge, skills, and character essential to productive citizenship, healthy choices, lifelong learning, and the ability to make a meaningful contribution to our global society.

Guiding Beliefs: *We believe…education is learner centered; learning is a continuous, life-long process; high standards are the foundation of this school system; each student has a right to an education and a responsibility to learn according to his/her abilities, as well as an obligation to allow others to exercise their same rights and responsibilities; everyone shall be treated with dignity and respect; each student shall be challenged to the maximize his/her full potential; all individuals and groups shall be accountable for their actions; quality public education is essential to a free, democratic society; everyone can learn; motivation, opportunity, expectations, and/or curiosity are essential to learning; education requires effective leaders committed to excellence; a safe and supportive environment is essential to education; education shall be responsive to changing students needs; collaboration among all the participants best serves the educational interests of Newport; Parent, family and Community involvement is central and critical for the success of all students in Newport Public Schools; Each student will be prepared to pursue higher education at the time of graduation and/or be certified/qualified to enter the workforce; technology proficiency is supported and valued.*

Vision Statement: Newport Public Schools is a student-centered learning community with a diverse and well-trained staff that recognizes the individual abilities of each student. Our schools provide a challenging educational environment where each student can realize his/her potential and engage in critical thinking, problem solving and effective communication.

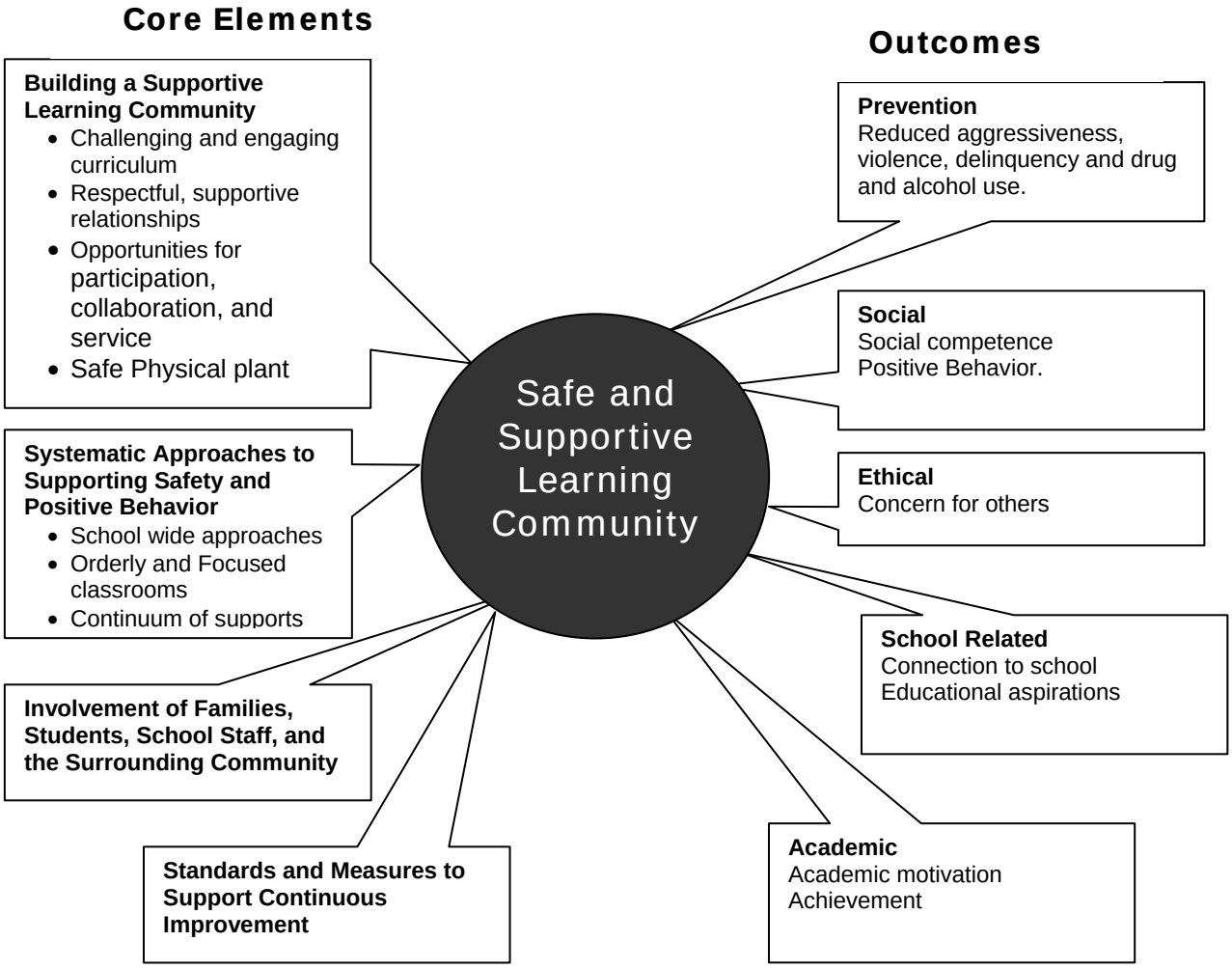
In looking at the Essential Question, Dr. Canole pointed out several points from *Every Child Learning: Safe and Supportive Schools.* Learning First Alliance, November 2001.

The mission of our public schools historically has been – and still needs to be – to prepare students to be productive citizens, to cultivate moral character, and to promote an appreciation of the arts and culture. Emphasizing the importance of learning along with other qualities that are essential to our society, such as fairness, concern for others, and responsibility, helps promote a shared commitment to the school's goals, establishes common ground, and shapes the norms that govern daily interactions. (Page iv)

Four core elements are necessary to create and maintain schools as safe and supportive places of learning. The four core elements we identify are: (page 1)

1. ***A supportive learning community****, including a challenging and engaging curriculum for all students; respectful, supportive relationships among and between students, school staff, and parents; frequent opportunities for student participation, collaboration, service and self-direction; and a physical plant that promotes safety and community.*
2. ***Systematic approaches to supporting safety and positive behavior****, including school wide approaches to climate, safety and discipline; orderly and focused classrooms; and a continuum of supports for the few students who need them;*
3. ***Involvement of family, students, school staff, and the surrounding community.***
4. ***Standards and measures to support continuous improvement based on data.***

Core Benefits and Outcomes of Safe and Supportive Learning Communities



The objective of creating a supportive learning community ought to be that everyone involved – staff, parents, and especially students – feels a strong sense of belonging in school, being concerned about one another's welfare, making significant contributions, having opportunities for ongoing learning and growth, and holding important goals and values in common with others. (Page 3).

When coupled with a consistent emphasis on academic performance ("academic press") a strong sense of community boosts academic achievement (Shouse, 1996; Lee & Smith, 1999). (Page 4)

Schools that provide a challenging and engaging curriculum for all students generally are organized around students and their work and place a strong and consistent emphasis on high academic achievement. Staff in these schools articulate and emphasize these high expectations in many ways, such as by showing interest, in intellectual issues and problems, expressing their high expectations for students, encouraging and taking an interest in student performance, sharing and exhibiting the work of all students, and providing constructive feedback to students about their performance and efforts. Moreover, teachers hold high expectations for all students, not just those considered "gifted" or "college material." No student is identified as unable to succeed or warehoused in dead-end classes.

All schools should put in place a robust curriculum that emphasizes both the basics and higher levels of thinking. Recognizing that students learn in many ways, teachers should use an appropriate mix of lecture, small-group work, and problem solving, hands-on activities, and extended in-depth inquiry. Teachers should regularly expect students to analyze and synthesize complex ideas and materials in classroom discussions and writing. Schools can maintain student engagement in learning not only by providing consistently challenging tasks, but also by promoting student self-direction and providing clear expectations of the purpose of learning activities and their interconnections.

Finally, effective schools generally involve staff, parents and students in developing, understanding, and supporting academic standards and the school's curriculum. Emphasizing the importance of learning in the wider school community, creates a common ground among students, families and staff; promotes shared commitment; and shapes norms that govern daily interaction. (Page 5)

Two important structural foundations for facilitating supportive relationships – and thus safe and supportive learning communities – are smaller schools and smaller class sizes. *In smaller schools, students and staff know each other well, making it easier to promote student engagement, supportive relationships, respect for others, and opportunities for challenge, service, and participation.*

Smaller schools experience lower rates of fighting and disruptive behavior and improved rates of attendance; graduation; participation in extracurricular activities; student, teacher, and parent satisfaction; and often, academic achievement, particularly among students from low-income and minority backgrounds. (Page 6)

While there is no precise answer to the question "How small is small enough?" research suggests that 300-400 students is an effective size for elementary schools, *as is 600-900 for secondary schools.*

While a safe and supportive learning community can be created in a dilapidated, poorly designed school, ***creating an environment in which students thrive is more easily accomplished in a physical plant that promotes safety and community.*** *Unfortunately, three in four U.S. schools need some kind of repair. About one third of all schools – serving 14 million students – need extensive repair or replacement. More than 11 million students attend schools that lack proper ventilation and other environmental controls. In addition, more than 20 per cent of all public school students attend overcrowded classrooms (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1996; National Center for Education Statistics, 1999).*

Students can read the message on the walls. When their school has peeling paint, clogged toilets, a leaky roof, dark hallways, littered playgrounds, and poor air quality, the message is that these students and their education are not respected or valued. This concrete evidence of disregard undermines efforts to create a respectful and caring school community.

The poor condition of many school buildings also has a demonstrable effect on student health, which can in turn affect achievement. Toxic physical conditions such as poor ventilation, environmental contaminants, and lack of daylight harm student's health and hinder their learning. (Page 12)

When designing new schools and evaluating or renovating existing schools, safety, community, and learning should be considered together. Building design and security technology can either support or undermine the school's vision and goals. Thus, communities should consider their goals comprehensively and identify the designs that promote both learning and safety. For example, cooperative learning, team teaching, student advisories, and after-school activities each have distinctive space and design needs. (Page 13)

5.0 What's a 21st Century Elementary School Look Like?

5.1 Current Research

Dr. Canole introduced Carey Principal Kimberly A. Homer and Coggeshall Principal Robert Frizelle. She asked both to address the committee about the current school environments and the optimum spaces.

Kimberly Homer reported that Carey School, one of two English as a Second Language (ESL) schools (Sullivan), services naval military families from around the world on a year round basis. As an ESL school, Carey practices an inclusion model, where ESL is incorporated into all classrooms. The staff has learned to work around space issues. The facility is well maintained and very clean thanks to a dedicated custodian. Through the Enhancing Education Through Technology Literary Classroom Initiative (E2T2:LCI) several teachers participated in a two-week training program that enabled the school to

receive several mobile computer labs to incorporate technology into the curriculum and to assist with reading assessments. The addition of the technology has lead to the creation of a Library Media Center in the center of the building, rather than being hidden in the basement sharing space with music and art. Carey is also the recipient of a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant and offers a wide range of after-school programs for students to participate in, most run by the Carey school staff.

In today's teaching environment, the district has embraced the workshop model. In today's classroom, in addition to the teacher, there will also be several support personnel such as reading specialists, special educators, para-educators, BOLD Volunteers, Parent Volunteers, all to work with students in providing individualized differentiated instruction. Rather than set-up classrooms with rows of desks and teaching all students the same thing at the same time, tables, shelving and learning spaces are needed. With the workshop model, the classroom is split up into several learning centers with a space for all students – a table for the teacher to work with a small group of students providing individualized instruction, an area for a reading teacher to work with a group of students, a computer area to allow students to work on computer skills, and perhaps another group of students working independently.

Coggeshall Principal Robert Frizelle reported that Coggeshall is coping with the new restrictions that are the result of changes in the fire code. Lack of space for a central library has lead to the creation of several libraries – K-2 Guided Reading Library; 3-5 Guided Reading Library; Social Studies Library; the main Library. The media center is spread out in cubicles in the hallways. There are several multi-use rooms. The old days of one teacher to many students has passed. Today, there are many adults in the classroom – the teacher, para-educators (aides), special educators, volunteers. As science and computer classes and curriculums become more hands-on, more space is required.

Dr. Shoemaker asked Principal Frizelle how the art, music, physical education and enrichment programs have fared at Coggeshall under the new restrictions. Principal Frizelle reported that several new fire code restrictions have come into play – only 20% of wall space can be covered, so student work is not able to be displayed and shown. With the auditorium/gym on the third floor, K-1 grades are restricted from the gym. Physical education for K-1 has been moved to the cafeteria. Art and music have small spaces dedicated to their use.

Patrick Kelley remarked that the Coggeshall staff should be congratulated for making due with the available space. He questioned why no action was taken on the 2002 NESDEC report.

Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr. asked the Principal's what they though the ideal class size were. Principal Frizelle reported that the current District Caps, K=19, 1-2=20, 3-5=22, were reasonable and most classrooms are below caps with a district average of 17 – 18 students per class with appropriate supports – reading teachers, special educators, para-educators.

Dr. Canole referred the subcommittee members to A Study of Supplemental Programs and Recommendations for the Abbott Districts by the New Jersey Department of Education. ***The evidence is compelling that small classes, e.g., 1:15 ratio, can be effective, at least in the early grades, particularly for reading instruction, and that the benefits persist and must be used jointly with other modifications to the learning environment to achieve and maintain academic achievement.*** *(Page 9 of 44)*

Patrick Kelley stated that the decision to close a school was highly dependent on three variables: enrollment estimates, available classrooms and class size. He emphasized the importance of understanding each of these variables.

Dr. Canole asked Principal Homer to explain Personal Literacy Plans (PLP's) to the subcommittee. Principal Homer reported that the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) recently mandated school districts to create Personal Literacy Plans for any student reading below grade level. The PLP moves with the student from grade to grade. The PLP contains the students reading data and indicates areas for personalized instruction. The PLP's are a component of our progressive monitoring initiatives. The March running record results will be used to determine summer program recommendations.

Dr. Canole again referenced A Study of Supplemental Programs and Recommendations for the Abbott Districts by the New Jersey Department of Education. ***Studies have shown that well-planned, developmentally appropriate full-day kindergarten programs for five year olds clearly provide one of the most cost effective strategies for lowering the dropout rate and helping children at-risk become more effective learners in elementary school, particularly in first grade*** *(Fromberg, 1987). (Page 7-8).*

5.2 Community Desires

Tom Flanagan conducted a brainstorming session which resulted in the following issues/concerns to be considered by the subcommittee.

- Class Size / Student teacher ratio
- Fire Codes
- NESDEC 62 classrooms optimum
- Teachers Contract
- Benefit of a larger school
- ADA Compliance
- Capital Improvements
- Maintenance Issues
- Should Sullivan be an 18 hour school? Operating hours of schools. What's Optimum?
- Continuity of Service
    - Less Student Mobility

- Full Time Specialists
- Teacher Collaboration (multiple classrooms at one grade level)
- More flex scheduling
- Facility cost savings

Fern Lima asked why only Carey and Coggeshall were represented. What about the practices in the other elementary schools? Principal Frizelle replied that Newport has embraced the workshop model of instruction, and regular professional development is provided to teachers on a grade level basis. The elementary curriculum and rituals and routines are common across all schools.

6.0 What are our current limitations to delivering a quality education?

6.1 Educational Quality

It was noted that supports are needed. The District needs to continue to address teacher professional development and teacher quality.

6.2 Enrollment Trends

Assistant Superintendent Robert B. Power, Ed.D. reported that there are several factors affecting the declining enrollment. Private school enrollment has increased (633 students 2004-05 SY); the North End reconfiguration has displaced many families and has converted quite a deal of the property available. This year, the kindergarten age change alone resulted in being down 2 kindergarten classes.

Paige Bronk reported that after the North End project is completed, there will be 100 owner occupied units; 175 units will be replaced on a 1:1 basis, but not necessarily in Newport. There will be 60 city units in the North End project. Projections for the next 5-10 years are relatively flat, to a slight increase. Dr. Canole indicated that based on current occupancies, she estimates an increase of 72 students at best. (During a phased construction schedule, the 498 units that comprise the Tonomy Hill housing complex are being demolished. When the 425 units of Newport Heights are completed, perhaps by the end of 2008, 313 of the units will be considered affordable housing and the remaining 112 will be sold or rented at market rates.)

Ed Brady reported that the current U.S. Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC-2005) may affect the Newport housing situation. May 15, 2005 is the date the President will submit the commissioner's recommendations to the Senate. On May 10, 2005 the Secretary submits to Congress, Commission, and publishes in Federal Register the list of bases and facilities to be closed.

Tom Flanagan indicated the need to design a facility plan with the most options. Mr. Flanagan indicated there were two last elements of constraints to examine: facilities – which will examine the 5 year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) by school, and will look at what New School Starting in 2005 Will Provide by Laura Warnick, one of the lead architects that designed the Frank E. Thompson Middle School.

6.3 Facility Capacity

Paul Fagan indicated the CIP, funded by the City of Newport, provides the only funding available to Newport Public Schools for building maintenance. The recent changes in the Fire Codes have resulted in a number of waivers being requested from the State Fire Marshall. Some of the challenges presented as a result of the new fire regulations affect our elementary schools: Grades PK – 1 must be housed and located on the same level of discharge; Grade 2 is allowed on a second floor; PK – 2 are not allowed on a third floor. The fire regulations also call for dedicated stairways for younger grade levels. Wire glass that is in place in many of our elementary schools is no longer allowed by code. The costs of installing sprinklers in our schools will be great. Mr. Fagan indicated that the Rogers High School roof project will be awarded at tonight's school committee meeting.

Colleen McGrath asked what the national average CIP was by community.

Bruce Alexander indicated that there were state incentives for the use of capital improvement funds. RIDE currently reimburses districts 30-34% of each dollar expended, depending on the project and the complexities of historic preservation, asbestos and lead abatement come into play. It was noted that Connecticut and Massachusetts reimburse 70-72% on the dollar.

Bruce Alexander noted that from a budget standpoint, Cranston-Calvert and Sullivan operate with a fixed operating budget of $300,000 while the other elementary schools, Carey, Coggeshall, Sheffield and Underwood all operate with a fixed operating budget of $250,000 to $260,000 each.

Louisa Boatwright discussed the possibility of new schools at the Underwood and Sullivan sites. It was noted that at Underwood, with 4 buildings, there is duplication of systems – each building has its own heater. Sydney Williams indicated that Underwood was a pilot program to build a school for handicapped children. Although one of two elementary schools that are handicapped accessible, Underwood is not ADA compliant.

It was noted that the brick and mortar of our elementary schools has been well maintained. Buildings are holding tight with most being recently re-pointed, new windows, new or repaired roofs. There are several constraints to our schools – there is no temperature controls in many schools – the heat is on or off.

6.4 Financial Constraints

Bruce Alexander reported that the 2005-2006 Fiscal Year Budget will contain some of the following increases:

- Step Increases (Both TAN & Local 841 Contracts expire and percentage increases are currently unknown until negotiations are finalized.)
- FICA and Medicaid payments
- Retirement System Costs ~ $600,000
- Health Insurance Costs increase of 5.2% ~ $250,000
- Dental Insurance Costs increase of 7%
- Electrical rates will stay constant – we are locked into 2002 rates
- Fuel Oil increases to ~ $2.00 per gallon
- Bus Contract increases of 3.25%
- Insurance Increases of 25-30%

Without adding any new programs, level funding programs at last years levels, 2005-06 appears to be in a deficit of $2.3 Million dollars.

What are the priorities of the City as a whole? Will the city tackle any of the issues or problems on a city-wide basis? Will the City be willing to request approval to exceed the 5.5% cap? The cap can be overridden if the local legislators introduce a bill requesting the cap limit be exceeded.

Dr. Shoemaker indicated that he did not see any significant cost savings in the Teachers Association of Newport contract. The School committee has unfunded extended benefits, administrative staffing and strike possibilities to deal with as the TAN contract is negotiated. This year, the School Committee and TAN will be negotiating through their attorneys; not utilizing the successful interest based bargaining techniques that were used in the past negotiations. The current budget situations severely restrict options for any new programs.

Mr. Flanagan indicated that we would break for lunch, and then resume our discussions on the delivery of education in Newport. We will consider long range longer than two years, and come to a consensus agreement what “Long Range” should be considered.

Sydney Williams reminded the subcommittee that whatever is done must be done for the primary benefit of the student.

The committee recessed at 12:15 p.m. for lunch.

7.0 How do we bridge the gap? Looking at options.

Tom Flanagan reconvened the meeting at 1:00 p.m. In the corporate world of long range planning, a five year plan is considered the norm. The committee seemed to agree that a 5-10 year plan is needed.

Dr. Power recommended that the committee consider building three new modern elementary schools that would replace the current six schools. He proposed the following:

- Build a new 350-400 student school on the site of the Underwood school that would house students from the Underwood and Carey schools.

- Build a new 350-400 student school on the site of the Coggeshall School that would house students from the Coggeshall and Cranston-Calvert schools. This school might be able to utilize some of the existing Coggeshall School.

- Build a new 350-400 student school on the site of the Sullivan School that would house students from the Sullivan and Sheffield Schools.

Dr. Power indicated that such a recommendation would require Newport to spend money, but Newport would achieve savings in the long run. Each of the buildings could be designed with 21st century learning in mind with all the special needs of education addressed. While individual school communities would be displaced and interrupted during the construction process, one construction was complete, everyone would have a new school to become their new communities.

Colleen McGrath indicated she thinks Newport is ready to invest in new schools.

Jo Eva Gaines indicated she thinks Newport needs new buildings, and that an aggressive long term plan needs to be put into place, not just a band aid approach to problem solving.

Becky Bolan noted that she felt it would be important to sell the whole package and not just a phase or stage of a plan. If the project is phased in and then fails to follow through to the completion of three new schools, the old schools would consider the promise of new schools as a ploy to assist in the closing of a school.

Louisa Boatwright indicated that a long term plan was definitely required. She questioned if three schools would be enough for Newport. She was concerned and indicated that perhaps 4 schools would be better for Newport.

Patrick Kelley indicated that the long term plan should consider the project timeline, and asked about the useful life of municipal buildings.

Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr. indicated that long range should extend out past ten years and be very long range. He indicated that he would like to maintain all the positive things we heard about during the recent school realignment hearings and bring them all into new buildings.

Ed Brady indicated that the long range plan must combine safety, community and the learning environment. He indicated the committee was talking about a very big project

– packaging the concept, selling the concept to the School Committee, the Council and the Community. A bond referendum will need to be passed successfully, and designs and bids will need to be obtained. The reality of undertaking three major construction projects at one time may be impossible to implement. When Sullivan School was build and added onto, schematic diagrams of potential expansion were drawn and included. Those plans should be looked at again and could provide a starting point of design for the new school at Sullivan.

Ray Gomes indicated that the long range plan must be accepted by the community.

Jim Perrier indicated he felt the biggest obstacle would be selling the package to the public.

David Koutsogiane indicated that he felt an aggressive approach to obtaining bond approval to implement the long range plan was needed.

Paige Bronk remarked that he felt a timeframe of less than 10 years is too short. He advised that the long range plan look 20 years out, executed in year 1. He discussed phasing the project, the public relations that would be needed long term to sustain the project.

Bonding capacity of the City of Newport was discussed. The State Historic Preservation Office was discussed and its impact on our existing buildings. The question of regionalization was briefly discussed.

Fern Lima inquired what would be done with the empty buildings.

Paul Fagan indicated that a Capital Campaign, similar the NPEF lead Thompson Capital Campaign, would be needed to make such a project happen. He questioned the physical possibility of building three schools at once.

Tom Flanagan asked, if Underwood were to close this September 1st, where would kids go and how do we sell that to the public? It was noted that there may be space in other classrooms within the district to absorb the Underwood students. It was noted that the Thompson students have made tremendous academic gains since moving back into the new Thompson Middle School. It was also noted that the CIP needed to be updated to reflect the long range plan.

Patrick Kelley indicated that we needed to come to a resolution of class size to be used as a criteria or measurement when developing our long range matrix.

Louisa Boatwright indicated that many of the emotional aspects of the community have to do with the ratings of each school. In developing the next CIP don't include projects to the elementary schools that may be closed.

Dr. Shoemaker indicated that perhaps an Alternative School could be housed at Sheffield. He indicated the short range picture looked bleak, however the long term

plan of three new elementary schools for the City of Newport on Harrison Avenue, Van Zandt Avenue and Dexter Street, looked promising. He remarked that phasing in would be considered although simultaneous construction at all three sights seemed most desirable.

The Triplett School Building was discussed. Built in 1962, it was designed as an elementary school. Currently, the building is fully occupied and used: Located on the first floor of the school are: Newport Partnership For Families & CATCH Coordinator; the Business Manager's office; the NPS Business Office; the NPS Records Department; and the Aquidneck Island Adult Learning Center. Located on the lower level are offices of the Newport Community School, Early Reading First, Community Literacy Coordinator, K-12 Literacy Coordinator, Business Office Archives, Professional Development Room, K-6 Math Coach, NPS Technology Department and Information Systems.

Dr. Canole provided a scenario of closing the second floor of Sheffield, keeping a grade of K-5 on the first floor, relocating the administration from the convent to the second floor of Sheffield, selling the convent with the proceeds going into a maintenance fund.

Remarks were made about the relocation of administration from the John Clarke building to the current Triplett location, when the elementary programs at Triplett were closed. Parents and the community liked the elementary programs at Triplett and were promised that the programs would continue in the schools. Lack of funding ended up in the programs not being continued and many parents remember this last school closing action.

Lenthal School and its disposition were discussed. Lenthal School action is on the agenda for tonight's school committee meeting.

The possibility of moving the Alternate Learning Program to Triplett was mentioned.

Dr. Canole urged the committee to look closely at elementary, but to also consider and include secondary schools in the long term plan.

The consensus of the committee was that a long range plan should be developed, put on the table and then go for it.

Dr. Shoemaker asked Paige Bronk if he would be available to assist in putting the long term plan together, including the marketing that would be needed.

8.0 Developing the recommendation to the Newport School Committee.

It was agreed to come back together to assess the NESDEC report and to develop a long term plan that would present the concept of three school consolidation – replacing old buildings with new buildings, reducing the number of schools in the district, and putting into place a defined long term plan.

Items to be considered for the next meeting include:

- Enrollment Numbers
- Will we be closing a school in September?
    - $300-400K in savings
- Do we realign Sheffield (1 each of K-5 on 1st Floor, Administration on 2nd Floor)?
- Do we need a swing school?
- What are short term answers to the $2.3M deficit?
- Re-verification of the NESDEC study

It was noted that one of the reasons the Newport School Department is in the current situation is because of 10 years of level funding from the City of Newport, when School Department strategy was to ask for no increase in an attempt to pass the Thompson Middle School bond issue.

Dr. Shoemaker indicated that our per pupil cost ($11,736) is third highest public school district in the state following Block Island ($19,414) and Narragansett ($12,686). We have one of the most expensive programs in the state. It will be a challenge to balance the budget without adding any new programs. Gas and oil bills continue to rise. We are looking at deficits of $2.5M, down to $1.1M if we close a school. The make-up of our community is changing – we have an increase in older citizens without children in the school systems. Younger families cannot afford the housing in Newport and are being driven out.

9.0 Next Steps

The next meeting of the Newport School Committee Facilities Planning Subcommittee will be at 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 18th, 2005, in Room 104, Lower Level, George H. Triplett Elementary School, 435 Broadway, Newport, RI.

Adjournment. Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr. Chairman called the meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr.
Chairperson